

The Office Action fails to address this feature of the independent claims. Applicants assert that such a feature would not have been obvious and/or reasonably predictable to one of ordinary skill in the art based on the applied references. Specifically, Hozumi discloses a driven roll body 143 (alleged drive roller unit) that is disposed at a remote location (i.e., in the image formation unit 21) as compared to the image read unit 24, which is located in the sheet supply unit 22. In addition, Sako's registration roller 25 and registration/reversing roller 26 (alleged drive roller unit and driven roller), which are disclosed as having different coefficients of friction, are disposed in Fig. 1 in an upstream direction in relation to the transparent platen 3 (alleged image reading part). Therefore, neither of the applied references discloses nor suggests the above-mentioned features.

Higaki discloses paired transport rollers 23 located downstream from the contact glass 2. Applicants assert that it would not have been obvious to simply use Higaki's rollers 23 in Hozumi and Sako given the additional features recited in claims 1 and 18 and the structure provided by Hozumi and Sako.

First, the obviousness rejection is not supported with a clear and explicit articulation of the reasons why the claimed sheet feeder/processing device allegedly would have been obvious including a reasonable rationale as to why the cited references would have been combined or modified. (*See* MPEP §§2141(III) and 2142, citing "*KSR*"). Specifically, mere conclusionary statements cannot sustain the rejections on obviousness; instead, there must be some articulated reasoning with some rational underpinnings to support the legal conclusion of obviousness. (*See* "*KSR*" quoting the Federal Circuit's *In re Kahn* decision with approval). Further, as discussed above, the obviousness rejection fails to consider the claimed invention as a whole, as required under MPEP §2141.02.

In addition, the proposed modification of the prior art improperly renders Hozumi unsatisfactory for its intended purpose. (*See* MPEP §2143.01(V)). The proposed

modification of Hozumi also improperly changes the principle of operation of Hozumi. (*See* MPEP §2143.01(VI)). Specifically, changing Hozumi's image read unit 24, which is located in the sheet supply unit 22, to be in a position such that the driven roll body 143 (currently disposed in the image formation unit 21) is immediately on downstream side of the image read unit 24, would completely rearrange Hozumi's sheet transport apparatus and result in changing Hozumi's intended purpose and/or principle of operation.

Moreover, there are possibly an infinite number of solutions for achieving the goal of a sheet feeder structure that prevents image reading failures caused by a sheet to be fed and instantaneously stopped at a reading part when a leading edge of the sheet collides with a roller disposed at a downstream position of the reading part. (*See* Applicants' specification paragraph [0002]). Yet the Office Action combines elements from three different references, all with different sheet feeding structure, and none of which are even close to the claimed structure, in order to suggest Applicant's claimed sheet feeder/processing device. Therefore, the Office Action's conclusion of obviousness must be based upon improper hindsight reasoning, because it is based upon knowledge gained only from Applicants' disclosure. (*See* MPEP §2145 (X.A)).

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully requests that the rejections be withdrawn.

The Office Action also rejects claim 7 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Hozumi in view of Sako and U.S. Patent No. 3,666,262 to Fowler; claim 9 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Hozumi in view of Sako and JP-A-2000-318904 to Kawano et al. (hereinafter "Kawano"); claim 10 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Hozumi in view of Sako and Fowler; and claim 19 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Hozumi in view of Sako and Kawano. The rejections are respectfully traversed.

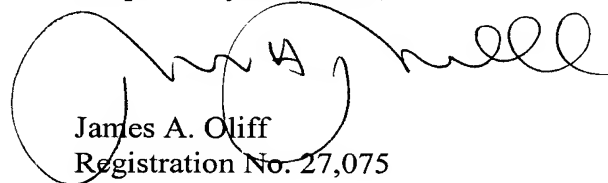
Claims 7, 9, 10 and 19, which depend from independent claims 1 or 18, are also patentable over the applied references for at least the reasons discussed above, as well as for

the additional features recited therein. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejections be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of the claims are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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Date: May 26, 2009

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